DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 311 714 FL 018 155

AUTHOR Brenner, Catherine A.
TITLE Teaching the Research Paper to ESL Students in American Colleges and Universities.
PUB DATE Jun 89
NOTE 82p.; Master's Thesis, School for International Training, Vermont.
PUB TYPE Information Analyses (070) -- Dissertations/Theses - Master Theses (042)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC04 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Classroom Techniques; *College Students; *English (Second Language); Higher Education; *Limited English Speaking; *Research Papers (Students); Writing (Composition); Writing Evaluation; *Writing Instruction; Writing Processes

ABSTRACT

The instruction of writing research papers to English-as-a-Second-Language (ESL) college students is discussed. The challenges facing all students learning to write research papers are noted, including choosing a topic, deciding on a thesis, research and documentation, and the actual writing of the paper. The challenges faced specifically by ESL students are examined, such as challenges in all language skill areas, cultural challenges, challenges in research and documentation, and in the paper's design. Six steps in the development and writing of a research paper are outlined: (1) choosing a topic; (2) general exploration of the topic; (3) formulating a hypothesis; (4) researching the hypothesis; (5) deciding on a definitive thesis, and (6) designing the paper for the American reader. A specific classroom approach for teaching this process is offered, including the introductory lecture, collaborative work with the students, important aspects of research and documentation (using the library and other available resources), and accompanying exercises. A suggested timetable is also provided, and a separate chapter addresses the evaluation of student work. The final section discusses a few additional resources, and a brief bibliography is appended. (MSE)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED311714

Teaching the Research Paper to ESL Students in American Colleges and Universities

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

C.A. Brenner

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

☑ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

Catherine A. Brenner

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Master of Arts in Teaching degree at the School for International Training, Brattleboro, Vermont

June 1989

© Catherine A. Brenner 1989

FL018155

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

This project by Catherine A. Brenner is accepted in its present form.

Date July 7, 1989

Project Advisor [signature]

Project Reader [signature]

Abstract

Most ESL students studying at colleges and universities in the United States are required at some point to write research papers. Along with looking at the challenges facing all students in writing research papers, this paper examines challenges specific to ESL students. The process of developing and writing a research paper is broken down into six steps, and an approach to teaching the research paper to ESL students is presented, as well as guidelines for evaluating student work.

ERIC Descriptors: English (Second Language)
Research Papers (Students)
Higher Education

Table of Contents

Introduction.....1

Chapter 1: Challenges for All Students.....6
- Choosing a Topic.....7
- Deciding on a Thesis.....10
- Research and Documentation.....12
- Actual Writing of the Paper.....14
- Conclusion.....16

Chapter 2: Challenges Specific to ESL Students.....17
- Language Challenges.....18
- Cultural Challenges.....20
  - -in the Purpose of a Research Paper.....21
  - -in Research and Documentation.....22
  - -in the Design of a Research Paper.....25
- Conclusion.....26

Chapter 3: Six Steps in the Development and Writing of a Research Paper.....28
- Step [1]: Choosing a Topic.....30
- Step [2]: General Exploration into the Topic.....31
- Step [3]: Formulating a Hypothesis.....32
- Step [4]: Researching the Hypothesis.....35
- Step [5]: Deciding on a Definitive Thesis.....36
- Step [6]: Designing the Paper for the American Reader.....37
- Conclusion.....40

Chapter 4: Teaching the Research Paper.....41
- Introductory Lecture.....43
- Collaborative Work with the Students.....48
- Important Aspects of Research and Documentation....53
  - Using the Library.....53
  - Other Resources Available to the Students.....54
  - Documentation.....55
- Accompanying Exercises.....57
- Suggested Timetable.....63

Chapter 5: Evaluation of Student Work.....65

Conclusion.....67
- Other Resources.....69

INTRODUCTION

In the fall of 1987 I accepted a position to teach and advise at Paul Smith's College, a small two-year college in the Adirondack Mountains of New York State. The college was increasing its international student population. I was to act as international student advisor and teach two English composition classes. I found myself in a unique position, teaching the same course to two very different groups. One of my classes was strictly ESL students consisting of students from Japan, the Dominican Republic, France, Haiti, Mexico, and Puerto Rico. The ESL students in this class ranged from advanced-beginners to high intermediates. The other class consisted mainly of American students who had had trouble in English classes previously or simply had not taken English in many years. Although both of the classes consisted of what the college considered 'special populations', I was expected to present the same material as in all of the other English Composition classes. It was the hope of the administration that the ESL students could emerge at the end of the semester at the same level as other American students.

Within these classes teaching the research paper was the culmination of the 10-week semester. The students needed the skills required in writing a research paper for their second semester of English at the college, which was a course in argumentative writing. As I looked through my many books on teaching composition to ESL students, I found nothing on teaching research papers, and I had little access to materials. So, I devised my own method for teaching the research paper to ESL students based on what I knew and read about teaching the same to American students, and on what I knew from having written similar research papers when I was a student. The ESL students successfully completed their first semester of English at the college. And although I was unsure at first whether the students' learning would be applicable later, I realized that my approach had indeed been successful when a Dominican student in her second semester of English came running into my office one day thanking me and announcing cheerfully that she had received an A on a research assignment.

In developing my approach, I began by asking myself the following questions:

-What are the inherent challenges facing any student when writing a research paper?

-What are the challenges specific to ESL students?

-How can I as a teacher meet these challenges and

successfully guide my students through writing a research paper?

In answering these questions I found that the assignment presented numerous challenges for any student, but for the ESL student, limited language ability and cultural differences added to these challenges. My main concern became to simplify a seemingly overwhelming assignment for the ESL students and make it more manageable while still allowing them to reach the same ability level at the end of the semester as other students.

I broke down the research assignment into six steps which emphasize the areas where international students seem to have difficulties. The first five steps focus mainly on the preparation needed for writing a successful paper. The sixth step, which looks solely at the actual writing of the paper, stresses design, or the organization of ideas within the essay, because I found this to be the biggest challenge for ESL students in writing. Admittedly the six steps in the process do overlap and to some extent happen simultaneously, but I found breaking down the process for the ESL students gives the students a handle on what is expected of them in the assignment.

The approach to teaching the research paper moves from teacher centered to one-on-one collaborative work between the student and the teacher. Through models and lectures,

the teacher initiates the research process, and as the students begin to supply their own content to the process by focusing on their own papers, the teacher continues the learning by guiding the student through developing and writing the paper.

The formalities of research and documentation are addressed alongside the more creative work of developing the student's ideas and argument. Careful documentation of source material is seen as necessary in writing a research paper, but because this aspect of a research assignment is so radically different from other aspects of developing and writing a research paper, they are taught separately to the class in a more traditional manner, giving the students a documentation method to follow and practice exercises.

In the evaluation of the research paper, both the student's successful participation in the process and the final product are considered. The teacher writes an evaluation of the student's work, and discusses the evaluation with the student. The student is directed toward areas where improvement could be made in future assignments.

My intention in writing this paper is not only to clearly outline the challenges ESL students face in research assignments, but also to suggest a method for teaching the research paper to ESL students studying at colleges and universities in the United States. As the number of

international students studying in degree programs at American universities increases, so does the need for looking more closely at how our institutions are addressing the academic needs of such students. I hope this paper may be helpful to other teachers who find themselves in the position of working with international students doing research.

CHAPTER 1

CHALLENGES FOR ALL STUDENTS

In developing an approach to teaching the research paper to ESL students, it seemed appropriate to look first at the challenges facing any student given this assignment. Regardless of the educatio or language background of the students, certain challenges are inherent in developing and writing a college-level research paper. In addition to the fact that both students and teachers consider the research paper a major project and a major grade during an already busy semester, the faculty and administration of the institution expect a certain final product.

This chapter will focus on those challenges which all students developing and writing research papers have in common. The challenges will be discussed in relation to four areas of a research assignment: the topic, the thesis, research and documentation, and the actual writing of the paper. The chapter will look at the general challenges in these four areas facing the average student given this assignment , be they native English-speakers or not. Understanding the challenges that will be discussed in this chapter and in the next chapter on challenges specific to

ESL students, gives the teacher direction in preparing to teach the research paper.

CHOOSING A TOPIC

Unaware that they will meet even greater challenges as the project unfolds, many students agonize over choosing a topic for their research papers. While some instructors ease this burden for the student by restricting the choice of topics or even giving them topics to choose from, many instructors give students freedom in the choice of topics. I will look here at the situation where students are given free choice of topic, for although restricting the topic choices may quicken a students decision-making process, it ignores one of the most important factors in writing a research paper: the students' own interests.

The first challenge a student faces when deciding on a topic for their reseach paper is to find a topic that interests them. The topic must hold a student's attention long enough for the student to finish the project. For students who have never taken the time to look closely at their interests, deciding on a topic that interests them is both a challenge and an opportunity. The average college student needs to do some introspection in order to pinpoint his or her interest areas. Most freshman in college are

just stepping off the turbulent stage of adolescence, a stage where their ideas change from day to day and hour to hour. Reflecting on their present thoughts gives college students a great opportunity not only to find a research topic in which they can invest themselves for perhaps six weeks, but also to consider possible future interests and goals.

The second challenge in choosing a topic for a research paper is to find a topic which is not too technical, overly controversial, or vague. A student must be conscious of his or her level of expertise at the start of the research process. For example, the typical college freshman would need four years of college and at least a few years of graduate study before writing a research paper on a topic such as three-dimensional fields in electromagnetic machines.

And while knowing something about the topic saves the students time and headaches, choosing a topic that is overly controversial can be problematic for most students. A student in one of my classes, as an example, chose to write about contraceptives. Although contraceptives are an interesting topic, the student had already formed a very strong opinion on the topic, and became quite emotional when I asked him how he was planning to address all of the different views on the use of contraceptives. He stubbornly

refused to address different views in his paper, which I found inappropriate for a research situation. Such subjective responses are common among students who choose too controversial a topic.

After successfully avoiding overly technical and extremely controversial topics, the student needs to avoid vague topics. A research paper on 'friendship', for instance, would prove difficult, because everyone defines the relationship called 'friendship' differently, and misinterpretation is guaranteed.

As a final step in choosing a topic the student needs to be sure there is enough information available on the topic. Although researching and writing about a recently sighted tribe of people living in what was previously considered an uninhabitable place may be a fascinating project, the student would find only sketchy reports, if anything. The student would be unable to document a research paper on this topic, and a research paper without documentation can hardly be called a research paper.

To summarize then, although it is only a first step in the process of writing a research paper, choosing a topic involves a variety of challenges. The students must explore areas of interest while being aware of their own ability levels. They must choose a clear topic for which they can

maintain some objectivity. And finally they should decide on a topic for which there is sufficient documentation.

DECIDING ON A THESIS

A common misconception for the average college student is that after choosing a topic, they are ready to find information in the library and write the paper. A research paper is not merely a series of observations made by others on a topic. Most college-level research assignments require a student to state an original view on the topic, and use the observations of others only as support for their own ideas. The student's original viewpoint or opinion on the topic is expressed in a thesis statement which is normally found at the start of the paper. Much of what applies to choosing a topic also applies to formulating a thesis, yet formulating an appropriate thesis is a much more involved process than choosing a topic and is vital to the success of the research paper.

Many students feel it is beyond their capacity to say something new on a topic. What the students do not realize is that no two people see the world in exactly the same way. The thesis need not be revolutionary or earth-shaking, but the student's challenge is to realize that his or her view on the topic is worthwhile, and should form the kernel

of the thesis. Once the student has succeeded in formulating a thesis, the thesis guides the student through the remainder of the research and writing.

Although stating one's view on the topic is the most important factor in formulating a thesis, the student faces some other minor challenges at this stage in the research assignment. First, the student should be sure the thesis fits the proportions of the assignment. Most research assignments limit the students to a certain number of words or pages. The student must be sure the thesis can be argued clearly and thoroughly within the limits of the assignment. Too broad a thesis will lead to a paper full of generalizations, while too narrow a thesis leaves the student with little to say.

In addition the student faces challenges in formulating a thesis which run parallel to the challenges in choosing a topic: the thesis must hold the interest of the student, and there must be enough information available to support an argument. Investment in a particular viewpoint provides motivation for the student to complete the assignment successfully. This investment also initiates the excitement that is often felt during successful research projects. On a more practical level, the student must be sure there is enough information available to support the thesis. Initial research usually indicates to the students whether adequate

support will be found through the library, through inter-library loan services, and through other independent research. In some cases a student may find it necessary to reformulate the thesis if enough information is not available on a timely basis.

RESEARCH AND DOCUMENTATION

The research and documentation portion of the research paper assignment brings both formal and time-consuming challenges for the student. Most research assignments require a certain number of citations to support the student's viewpoint. The challenges for the student come in searching for and locating proper sources, in extracting the appropriate information from these sources, and in carefully documenting all this material.

Depending on the library available to the student, research is more or less of a challenge. Larger libraries, while having more complete collections of books and other materials, force the student to look through hundreds of cards in the card catalog and many stacks of books before finding exactly what he or she needs. Some students find searching for materials in large libraries overwhelming, although computer systems in some libraries are making it easier. In smaller libraries, on the other hand, the

student's task may seem more manageable, but often the student is not able to find the needed sources. Smaller libraries tempt the student to ignore material which may be available in other libraries. The student meeting the challenge of smaller libraries uses services such as inter-library loan, and then may face the additional challenge of waiting weeks for materials to arrive.

When the student locates a number of sources, more challenges arise in choosing the appropriate portions of the material to use in the research paper. A student must look critically at all of the material and be able to judge it for accuracy and authoritativeness. Common errors occur when students use outdated or inaccurate material to support their views.

If the source is appropriate, the student must then locate the portions of the text which specifically support the thesis, and decide whether directly quoting the material or paraphrasing would be more effective given the argument. The challenge for the students comes in that there is no rule for when paraphrasing might be better than quoting directly from the text.

Finally from the time research begins until the time the last pages of the research paper and bibliography are typed, the student faces the time-consuming formality of documentation. As the student locates appropriate source

material, the student must carefully record all bibliographic information. Accurately recording this information is a requirement for all forms of research. Missing a page number or specific publishing information shows carelessness and may be reflected in the final evaluation of the assignment. More grievous errors in the documentation process could be construed as plagiarism, and in many colleges and universities confirmed cases of plagiarism lead to failure or expulsion.

ACTUAL WRITING OF THE PAPER

The actual writing of the paper presents varying degrees of difficulty depending on the student. If the student has been successful in all of the work up to the point where writing begins, then the challenges of writing are minimized. An interest in the topic, an appropriate thesis, and thorough research direct the writing. The student then faces all of the expected challenges of writing other essays with additional challenges specific to essays utilizing information from other sources.

The first challenge in writing a research paper is for the student to focus on his or her own ideas, leaving the information from other sources only to support the student's argument as needed. After spending a great deal of time

researching and taking notes, there is a temptation to simply relate in a series all of the material that has been collected from other sources. This temptation derives from the student's desire to show the success of the research. In addition the challenge of focusing on one's own ideas may be intensified by the misconception that college research papers are the same as high school research papers. In general, most high school research papers do not require an original viewpoint on a topic, and a typical goal for teaching the research paper in high school is simply for the student to learn how to use the library.

After the student has chosen the specific information from other sources to use as support, the student then faces the challenge of incorporating this information into the research paper without breaking the flow of the argument. Information from other sources must be properly introduced and discussed by the student. In this phase of the writing, transitions become very important in preventing choppy writing.

The final challenge in the actual writing of a research paper which differs from writing undocumented essays, is in the tone. Without making the research paper dull, the student must maintain a serious and objective tone throughout. Only extremely talented and well-respected writers are able to use different tones to their advantage

in research-based projects. The average college student loses credibility with the use of emotional writing, humor, slang, or cliches.

CONCLUSION

This chapter has discussed the general challenges facing any student writing a research paper in an American college or university, regardless of the student's native language and educational background. The chapter has covered the challenges facing the student in deciding on a topic, formulating a thesis, researching and documenting source material, and in the actual writing of the paper. The next chapter will look more closely at the challenges specific to students whose native language is not English, but who are given the same research assignment.

CHAPTER 2

CHALLENGES SPECIFIC TO ESL STUDENTS

In Chapter 1 we looked at the general challenges facing any student when developing and writing a research paper. Regardless of the language and cultural background of a student, writing a research paper is a sizeable challenge. A student must decide on a topic, develop a workable thesis, support the thesis through proper research and documentation, and finally write the paper. Even for students who have written some form of research paper previously, a college level research assignment generally presents the new challenge of starting to write as a professional rather than a student.

ESL students studying at American colleges and universities are generally expected to complete the same work as American students, yet due to their different backgrounds they face additional challenges in completing this work. In addition to the challenges discussed in chapter 1, ESL students writing research papers find that language and cultural challenges make the assignment much more difficult. This chapter looks specifically at these additional challenges facing the non-native speaker of

English given a research assignment in an American college or university.

LANGUAGE CHALLENGES

At first glance it seems obvious that the greatest challenge facing the ESL student throughout a research assignment is the English language. A student with limited language ability requires much more time and effort to produce the same final product as an American student who has grown up speaking and writing English. Specifically, the language challenges facing ESL students in research assignments lie in the areas of reading comprehension, writing ability, and to a lesser extent, listening comprehension.

The ESL student writing a research paper faces great challenges in the area of reading comprehension. Once the ESL student has succeeded in locating a number of possible sources as support for their argument, the student must read through the material to find specific information to use in their papers. This task involves much more time and effort for the ESL student than for the native speaker of English, and it often involves reading texts which are much too technical or theoretical for the language skill level of the student. When faced with such reading the ESL student often

must revert to looking up every other word in a dictionary in order to discover the meaning of the text. Simply understanding the meaning takes many hours longer for the ESL student, and then the student must extract the specific information and quotes which best support the thesis. At this stage with a limited idiomatic knowledge of English, the student faces the challenge of judging which passages best support their argument.

The actual writing of the paper also presents a major language challenge for the ESL student. Often ESL students have very clear thoughts on a topic, but they lack the language to clearly express these ideas in written English. Limited vocabulary, problems with grammar and mechanics, and improper idiomatic uses of English make the process of writing the research paper a much more involved process for the ESL student, than for the American student. Almost every international student who comes to me for help on a research paper begins the session by handing me their work and insisting that there are "many mistakes."

Finally, in the area of listening comprehension, the ESL student may face lectures pertaining to the research paper, and a library orientation. In my experience as advisor and teacher, international students seem to complain a great deal about not understanding lectures. Any major research assignment is usually introduced and discussed by

the professor in a short lecture. In these short lectures an ESL student must listen carefully or miss important guidelines or instructions concerning the assignment. A library orientation presents additional challenges to the student in this area. Most library orientations cover a great deal of new information in a brief period of time, and this information is relayed by a new voice to which the students may not be accustomed.

CULTURAL CHALLENGES

Limited English ability, although an obvious challenge, is not the only challenge faced by the international student writing a research paper in an American college or university. An American research paper is also an interesting cultural challenge for international students. By the time American students enter college, they are primed culturally and educationally for writing a college-level research paper. Most American students have done some form of simple research paper by the time they graduate from high school. International students, on the other hand, rarely have the benefit of such previous training. When faced with a research assignment, international students must learn the cultural expectations behind the project. In this chapter I wish to discuss the cultural challenges I perceive in the

purpose for writing a research paper, in research and documentation, and in the design of the research paper.

Cultural Challenges in the Purpose of a Research Paper

Beth Neman in her book Teaching Students to Write states that in a research paper "an attempt is made to add to the accumulation of the world's scholarship." (175) This statement appropriately describes the purpose of an American research paper. As previously stated in Chapter 1, it is important for a student writing an American research paper to argue an original viewpoint on a topic. Without a new view on the topic the research paper merely presents a series of already established observations. It does not add anything to the world's scholarship. Teachers in America even encourage their students to challenge the beliefs of others. Allowing and even requiring students to have their own opinions stems from America's history of believing in independence, freedom of expression, and individuality. Many other cultures teach their students not to question the views of the authorities. In these cultures there is little discussion in the classroom. The teacher generally lectures and the students are responsible for learning the material in the lecture. Students with this kind of cultural background, especially those from East Asia, often find it

very difficult to develop and argue their own opinion on a topic, as is required in an American research assignment. In my experience, many international students initially present theses mimicking already held beliefs which are easily supported by many different sources, for example a thesis which holds that smoking is hazardous to health. As a teacher, I had to continuously challenge such students to look at their topics in new ways and not rely so much on what others have already said before them.

Cultural Challenges in Research and Documentation

In addition to the cultural challenges facing international students in the purpose of writing an American research paper, the students also face cultural challenges in the research and documentation portion of the research assignment. The most obvious research challenge they face is becoming familiar with the American library system. While some students find similarities between American libraries and libraries in their native countries, a good number of international students find the American library system confusing. Not only are there differences in the way books and periodicals are catologued and referenced, but the rules for the use of books both inside and outside the library differ from many other countries. These differences

were evidenced in the number of questions my ESL students asked about the library, finding the books in the library, and about taking the books out of the library.

After becoming familiar with the library and finding the necessary sources to support the thesis which has been developed, then the challenges of documentation begin for the ESL students. Proper documentation is very important in the United States both academically and professionally, and international students face two main challenges when documenting a research paper: deciding which portions of the paper require documentation, and deciphering the American system of documentation.

Initially many international students have little feel for what needs documenting in their papers. First drafts of the research papers written by the international students I have worked with generally use uncited information from other sources. When I ask the students why they do not document such information, many reply that they find the language used by the author is superior to their own, so they simply use the same words and sentence structure to express what they want to say. When questioned further, the students seem to feel that the information does not need documentation. This seems to indicate that Americans require stricter documentation than some other cultures. Due to such cultural differences in the need for documenting

specific material, the ESL student is faced with the challenge of learning the American system for when to document material.

The second challenge for an ESL student when documenting an American research paper is to decipher the American system of documentation. Any student doing research may notice the inconsistencies in the documentation in source materials found in libraries. One day a Taiwanese student asked me what the differences were between footnotes, endnotes, notes, bibliography, references, works cited, and literature cited. In my attempt to define these words for the student, I had to explain that the system of documentation has been modified many times over the years, and that documentation also differs from field to field. From these inconsistencies, some international students conclude that there is no strict system of documentation in the United States, and as a result their documentation in research papers follows no particular method. I have noted the tendency especially among some Asian and Latin students to be inconsistent in the order, formatting, and punctuation of citations, even though all the necessary information is given. The challenge for the international student then is to learn the basics of documentation in the United States, and the importance of such things as formatting and punctuation. Once learned, these students must remain

consistent in their method of documenting throughout their papers.

Cultural Challenges in the Design of a Research Paper

Finally I wish to discuss the cultural challenges international students face in the design of an American research paper. By 'design' I mean the way in which the student organizes or structures the paper. Students who have grown up and been educated in different cultures often organize their ideas differently. Among the Japanese students I worked with at Paul Smith's College, I noted a tendency to hide their theses in the final paragraphs of their essays, thus giving an American reader a directionless feeling throughout the paper. The Latin students in my classes, on the other hand, seemed to state their opinions quite strongly at the outset, yet support their opinions with an unstructured discussion of the topic.

Although discussed in different terms, this phenomenon has been noted by a number of authors in the fields of culture and linguistics. Robert Kaplan in his article, "Contrastive Rhetoric and the Teaching of Composition" describes these cultural differences in the organization of ideas as varying rhetorical styles.(1967) In his book Beyond Culture, Edward Hall sees this phenomenon as

differing patterns of logic between cultures. (213) And Patricia Carrell, in her article "Schema Theory and ESL Reading Pedagogy," defines these differences in terms of schema theory, and holds that formal schemata ["background knowledge of the formal, rhetorical organizational structures of different types of texts" (560)] varies from culture to culture. Applying schema theory to the example of a research paper written by an ESL student, the American reader in many cases is not able to activate an appropriate formal shema for understanding the structure or design of the ESL student's research paper, and therefore is unable to comprehend the essay.

While in more creative writing assignments instructors often find differences in essay design acceptable and even interesting, research papers require a stricter design in the organization of the essay. The challenge then for ESL students is to learn a new way of expressing their ideas, and a new method of designing their essays in research assignments.

CONCLUSION

This chapter has focused on the challenges specific to ESL students writing research papers. In addition to a variety of language challenges, especially in the areas of

reading and writing, the ESL student faces cultural challenges in the purpose of the assignment, in the research and documentation involved in an American research paper, and in designing the paper for the American reader. These challenges, along with those already discussed in chapter 1, make developing and writing a research paper a much more difficult task for the ESL student than for the average American student. It is with these challenges in mind that we turn to the question of how to teach the research paper to ESL students studying at American colleges and universities.

CHAPTER 3

SIX STEPS IN THE DEVELOPMENT & WRITING OF A RESEARCH PAPER

After looking at the challenges facing any student when writing a research paper as well as the challenges specific to non-native speakers given the same assignment, my task was to develop an approach to teaching the research paper to my class of ESL students. The approach had to be clear and simple. It had to assume that the students had never written a paper of this kind. The approach had to give ESL students the basics in developing an acceptable paper, and had to give the students skills they could transfer to writing assignments in other classes.

In developing my approach to teaching the research paper to ESL students, I broke down the process of developing and writing a research paper into six steps. Breaking down the assignment in this way is based on the belief that the research paper is a major, and sometimes overwhelming, challenge for an ESL student. By presenting the process in a step-by-step fashion, the students have direction and find the process more manageable.

The first five steps in the six-step breakdown described in this chapter emphasize the preparation which is involved before writing a research paper. The writing of a research paper is viewed as a process in which successful preparation for writing is key to writing the paper. For ESL students in particular, preparation for writing is extremely important in formulating their own ideas on a topic, and finding specific information to support their views. Preparation involves such things as deciding on a topic, formulating an appropriate thesis, and researching the thesis thoroughly. In my experience both as a student and as a teacher, successful writing of the paper follows directly from successful preparation.

In the sixth step of the process, which focuses solely on designing the paper, the research paper is seen as a very specific form of communication. The content of research is relayed in a specific design following specific formalities. The design of research differs from culture to culture, and therefore causes difficulties for the ESL student. By focusing on design in the writing of the paper, it stimulates the students to focus their efforts on organizing their essay for the American reader.

STEP [1]: CHOOSING A TOPIC

The first step in preparation to write a research paper, as I have chosen to break down the process, is choosing a topic. This is the stage at which the student decides on a general area of academic interest to explore. Some example topics might be:

-English Proficiency Exams

-Public Education in the United States

-Pesticides

-Tourism in the Dominican Republic

The topic is general; it states no opinion and gives no hint as to the direction the paper will take. Completion of this step should require some thought but not a great deal of time on the student's part. In my experience, defining the topic in this way allows the student to successfully complete the first step of the process rather quickly, which in turn gives the student initial confidence in their ability to complete the assignment.

The topic is one of academic interest to the student. It is important to distinguish topics of academic interest from those of purely personal interest. Yes, a student should be enthusiastic about the topic in order to have the motivation to complete the assignment, but the student's purpose should be serious and scholarly. When advised to

simply choose a topic of interest, students run the risk of choosing highly controversial topics, such as drugs or sex, for which they might have strong bias. By emphasizing that the interest be academic, not personal, this encourages the student to choose a topic for which they have some distance and objectivity.

STEP [2]: GENERAL EXPLORATION INTO THE TOPIC

In step [1] the student accomplishes the initial focusing of their ideas, but the student is not yet ready to begin researching and writing the paper. They must first do some general exploration into the topic as preparation for formulating their own opinions or viewpoints on the topic. General exploration may involve doing some general reading on the topic, discussing the topic with others, or doing some individual brainstorming. General exploration helps the student start thinking about the topic and its different aspects. As yet the student is not looking for specific information on the topic. The student is merely considering the topic in its entirety in order to be able to formulate an opinion or viewpoint of their own.

The amount of exploration needed to formulate a clear opinion on a topic depends on the student's previous knowledge of or acquaintance with the topic. If the student

is quite familiar with the topic, the time needed for exploration will be minimized, and will serve only to refresh the student's memory. If the student has only marginal familiarity with the topic, deeper exploration is required before developing a viewpoint. If the student is unfamiliar with the topic, time constraints may present a problem.

Particularly for ESL students at this stage of the research process, general reading helps them begin thinking about the topic in English. The students familiarize themselves with related vocabulary, and are thereby able to begin expressing their views on the topic in the target language.

STEP [3]: FORMULATING A HYPOTHESIS

With the topic fresh in their minds, the students are ready to formulate hypotheses concerning their topics. I use the word 'hypothesis' to mean the student's own opinion or viewpoint on the topic before it is proven or supported. Some example hypotheses may be:

-English proficiency exams required of international applicants to American universities are not accurate measures of the student's academic abilities.

-Government control has led to a decrease in the quality of public education in the state of New York.

-Pesticides used by grape growers in California may endanger the California wine industry.

-Inflation rates in the United States and the changing value of the U.S. dollar are major factors influencing tourism in the Dominican Republic.

An important aspect of the hypothesis is that it is arguable. The hypothesis promotes debate and demands research. From the above examples, one could just as easily argue that proficiency exams are good measures of the future performance of international students at American universities, or argue that factors other than government control have had greater effects on decreasing the quality of public education in New York State. In any case, support from outside sources is necessary to support any serious viewpoint on such topics.

Another aspect of the hypothesis is that it is as yet uncertain whether it can be successfully argued, just as in scientific experimentation the hypothesis is an educated guess as to the outcome of a planned experiment. In the case of research papers, the student plans to develop an argument which will successfully reach the conclusion

expressed in the hypothesis, but until the research is completed, the student is unsure whether the premise will hold.

A final aspect of the hypothesis is its originality. Unlike the research paper written at the elementary or secondary school level, the research paper at the university level synthesizes information from other sources in a new way and therefore comes to an original conclusion. The student formulates such an original viewpoint in isolation. It is particularly important for ESL students to put aside any books or materials used in step [2] and freely explore their own views on the topic. Linguistically and culturally an international student is often tempted to use the words or opinions of others as the main idea in a research paper, but this does not fit the requirements for a hypothesis in an American research paper in which the student must have new insight into a topic. Instead of repeating for example that the quality of public education in the United States has decreased, the student needs to work toward seeing the problem in a new way by looking at the causes, solutions, or other related problems that have not been previously put forward.

STEP [4]: RESEARCHING THE HYPOTHESIS

An arguable viewpoint on a topic requires support, and in a research assignment this support comes from research. In step [4] the student finds support for the hypothesis developed in step [3]. The support comes from books, periodicals, interviews, scientific experimentation, and other sources. Research differs from any general reading done in step [2] in that the students are now seeking specific information which supports their argument, and the information is carefully documented not only to give credit to others, but also to support the credibility of the researcher's argument.

The viewpoint expressed in the hypothesis guides the research. A student who holds that inflation in the United States leads to an increase in tourism in the Dominican Republic must first locate statistics which show inflation rates in the United States and numbers of tourists travelling to the Dominican Republic. The student is not looking for a source which argues the same viewpoint, but rather the student must search for supporting evidence to back his or her own argument. A further example of this is the student writing about English proficiency exams. As supporting evidence for the hypothesis that such exams do not accurately measure the abilities of the students, the

researcher must locate specific information such as proficiency exam results and course grades of the students taking such exams as entrance exams.

During step [4] of the research process careful documentation emerges as an important factor. For ESL students this portion of the assignment warrants particular attention. As the student begins finding specific support for his or her viewpoint, the formalities of documentation begin. Bibliographic information is carefully recorded and page numbers are noted where specific information is located. Careful attention to this portion of the assignment is vital to successful research.

STEP [5]: DECIDING ON A DEFINITIVE THESIS

Step [5] is the stage at which the student decides whether or not there is enough proof from research to warrant making the hypothesis a thesis. Making a hypothesis a thesis follows directly from the successful completion of the research done in step [4]. If the student has found sufficient evidence to support the hypothesis, the hypothesis automatically becomes the thesis for the paper. If the student after thorough research is unable to find enough information to support an argument successfully, the

student must go back and formulate a new hypothesis or even choose a different topic.

It is important to state step [5] separately for a number of reasons. First, students who are not able to find enough support from other sources to prove their hypotheses, may be tempted to write the paper anyway. Presenting step [5] as a distinct stage in the process helps the student to avoid this temptation. Secondly, step [5] helps ESL students in particular to understand the connection between hypothesis and thesis, and how one becomes the other through research. In my experience, stating this step separately seemed to encourage the students to formulate their own opinions on a topic more readily, because a distinction is made between forming an opinion and proving that opinion.

STEP [6]: DESIGNING THE PAPER FOR THE AMERICAN READER

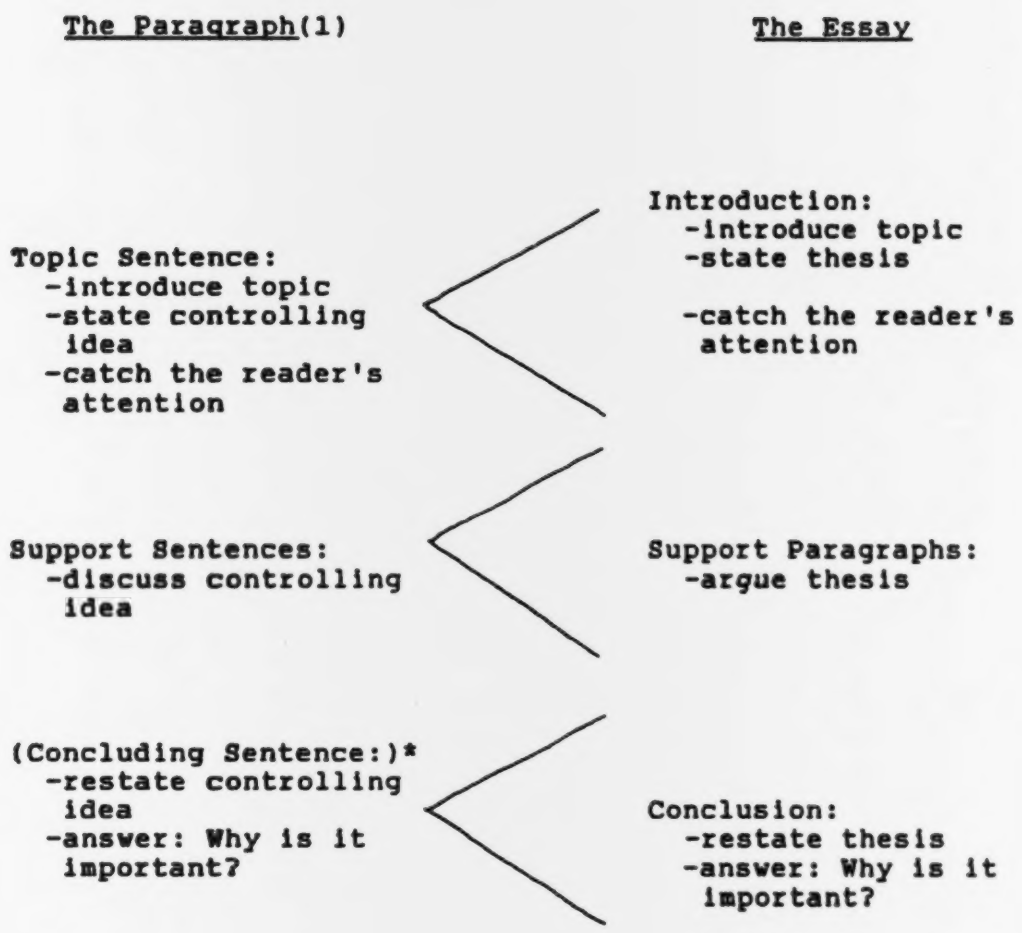
If the student does find enough support to prove the hypothesis, the actual writing of the paper begins in step [6]. At this stage the student needs to develop the ideas and the support into a well organized essay. The assumption made at this stage of the process is that the student's preparation for writing has been successful, and the student's ideas are clear and fresh. The challenge at this stage, especially for the ESL student is to design the essay

for the American reader. Because ways of expressing ideas differ from culture to culture, I found the most effective way of addressing the actual writing of the research paper was to focus on design. Step [6], therefore, presents the students with a model design to follow in writing their papers. (see Figure 1)

The model I used is based on expanding paragraph design into designing an essay with the basic difference between the two being the amount of information relayed. Culturally, in expository writing and specifically in research writing Americans state their view at the start, support the view in the body of the text, and conclude by restating their view. This design can be seen in paragraph organization as well as in the organization of material in essays. Comparing essay design to paragraph organization is effective especially when working with ESL students, because paragraph organization is easy to model, and international students generally have had experience reading and writing paragraphs previous to this assignment.

As shown in figure 1, the design of an essay corresponds to the design of a paragraph. In the paragraph the author introduces a topic, presents an idea which controls the direction of the paragraph, and catches the reader's attention. The introduction in an essay, which may be one or more paragraphs, serves the same purpose, with the

FIGURE 1



(1) paragraph model based on model found in Refining Composition Skills by Smalley and Ruetten.

*In brief paragraphs a concluding sentence is not required.

idea presented in the thesis controlling the direction of the entire essay. As support sentences in the paragraph discuss the controlling idea of the paragraph, support paragraphs in an essay prove the thesis presented in the introduction. And finally, in the model presented, the conclusion in a research paper, as in paragraphs, should restate the thesis and tell the reader why this thesis is important.

Some may contend that this comparison of a paragraph to an essay is oversimplified. It is true that writing in English involves much more than is presented here, and I did not hide this from my students. I informed them that most published essays, when analyzed, do not follow such a strict design, but the design I give them effectively communicates ideas in English, and once the students learn this design, they can build on it. Following the design shown in Figure 1, the students are able to gain some insight into American logic, produce clear essays, and their confidence as a result of mastering this design allows students to effectively vary their writing in other assignments.

Designing the research paper for the American reader is seen as the last major step in a research assignment. Other aspects of the assignment, such as incorporating information from other sources smoothly into the essay or correcting mechanical errors, are addressed in exercises accompanying

the research assignment, in the collaborative work done between the student and the teacher, and in the final editing stages of the project. More on how these other aspects can be addressed is found in chapter 5.

CONCLUSION

In this chapter I have broken down the process of writing the research paper into six steps which address the challenges faced by ESL students in research assignments. My attempt was to make the process of developing and writing a research paper clearer and more manageable for the students, and to give them a method for successfully completing the assignment. Using these six steps as a framework, the next chapter will discuss an approach to teaching the research paper to ESL students.

CHAPTER 4

TEACHING THE RESEARCH PAPER

Any approach to teaching the research paper involves many variables which require the teacher's flexibility. The research paper is usually taught as a long term assignment alongside other work being done in a course. In the case of my classes at Paul Smith's College, the research paper was part of a very full syllabus. While the students worked on their research papers, other material was covered in the class. Altogether from the time the research paper was assigned until the final draft was due, about half of the class time was devoted to work on the research paper. Because the research paper is taught in this way, the teacher must be flexible in planning and working with the students. Also due to the nature of the assignment, the students do a great deal of independent work, each exploring a different viewpoint on a topic. Such an assignment requires the teacher to give individual attention to the students when giving feedback on their work. Especially with ESL students, the teacher soon realizes that the students all have different needs, so the teacher must be flexible in addressing those needs. For all of these reasons then, as I began developing my approach to teaching

the research paper, I found it did not lend itself well to prescriptive lesson planning. Instead, I have chosen to discuss my approach in a format which looks independently at the different aspects involved in teaching the research paper.

In exploring the different aspects involved in teaching the research paper, this chapter first suggests a method of introducing the research paper to an ESL class through a lecture which presents the six-step process discussed in chapter 3. The lecture serves to initiate the research process and as the students go through the steps of the process, the teacher does more and more individual collaborative work with the student. The second part of the chapter looks at how the teacher works collaboratively with the student in developing and writing a research paper. The third section of this chapter focuses on important aspects of research and documentation which the students must attend to alongside the more creative work of developing their argument. In the fourth section of the chapter some example exercises are presented which can be used to address some common needs ESL students seem to have when writing research papers. And finally a suggested timetable is given for teaching the different components involved in documenting and writing the paper.

INTRODUCTORY LECTURE

The teacher is responsible for initiating the research process. Whether through simply handing out a written assignment, as is the case in many university level courses, or through explaining the assignment in its entirety, the teacher prompts the students to begin work on the research paper. In my class at Paul Smith's College, the research paper was considered a major assignment and the ESL students needed the skills involved in writing research papers for future courses at the college. For both of these reasons, I chose to devote two class periods to introducing the research paper and initiating the research process. The introduction to the research assignment has the following objectives:

-To initiate student thinking about research papers.

-To give the students an overview of the research assignment.

-To outline what is expected of the students in completing the assignment.

-To initiate work on choosing a topic for the research paper.

To meet these objectives, I found the best way was through a lecture format which introduces the six-step research process detailed in chapter 3.

To introduce the lecture I used a warm-up exercise, which started the students thinking about the research process. The exercise gives the students a reference point from which to understand the comments which will be made in the lecture. The teacher starts by writing the words 'research paper' on the board and asking the students if they have ever written research papers before in English or in their native language. The teacher asks what the students remember from writing those research papers. The discussion is brief, no more than 10 minutes, just to give the students some idea what the focus of the class will be. After such a discussion, the teacher hands out the written assignment, if it has not been distributed previously, and answers any questions about the written assignment. (For an example research assignment, see Appendix A.)

The brief initial discussion and handing out the research assignment provide the teacher with an opportunity to begin the lecture by pointing out that the research process to be followed for this assignment will likely differ from what the students have done in the past. In the form of a handout or diagram on the board, the teacher

presents the six-step approach to developing and writing a research paper which the students will use:

[1] Choose a topic.

[2] If you are unfamiliar with the topic, do some exploration or general reading.
If you are familiar with the topic, go to [3].

[3] Formulate your own hypothesis and your own basic argument.

[4] Research your hypothesis.

[5] If your research supports your hypothesis, then your hypothesis becomes your thesis; go to [6].
If your research disproves your hypothesis, go to [1] or [3].

[6] Design your paper for the American reader.

The objective in the lecture is to carefully explain each of the six steps presented in this diagram giving examples of each step and pointing out areas of concern for ESL students.

In presenting the six-step research process to ESL students I have found the example of a detective solving a mystery to be very useful. (Neman 179-80) Most ESL students studying at American colleges and universities have seen TV shows or movies in which a detective is faced with a crime

and must search for clues in order to prove what actually happened. In comparing this to the research process the students must follow, the crime is the topic that is chosen for the research paper, or step [1] of the process.

The example I have used in lectures is a murder mystery. A man has been murdered, and the detective must find out how and why. First the detective must do some general exploration into background information in order to form an opinion about what might have happened. In this initial exploration, which is similar to step [2] in the research process, the detective finds out a number of things including that the man was wealthy, middle-aged, married, and died of poisoning. After collecting other similar information about the man, the detective formulates an initial hypothesis. The detective believes that the man was killed by his wife after she found out that he was having an affair with his secretary. Such an opinion is similar to the hypothesis formed in step [3] of the research process. In order to prove his opinion, the detective must search for clues and other evidence that he can link to the murder suspect, such as a bottle of poison with the wife's fingerprints on it. Finding that evidence and linking that evidence to a suspect is similar to the research and documentation involved in step [4] of the research process. If the detective finds enough evidence to support his

hypothesis, then the suspect can be arrested and brought to trial. If, however, the detective is unable to find enough proof to support his claim, then the detective must go back and reformulate his hypothesis in a different way. Deciding whether there is enough evidence to arrest the wife is similar to step [5] in the research process where the student decides whether there is enough support to warrant making the hypothesis a thesis. As a final comparison, the writing of the paper and designing it for the American reader is similar to the argument prepared and presented in a trial. The lawyer must carefully develop an argument which will convince the jury of the wife's guilt or innocence.

The comparison of the research process to a detective solving a mystery has been successful in clarifying the six-step research process to ESL students. This example used in conjunction with an actual research example leaves the students with a clear idea of the steps they must follow in completing the assignment.

Following the lecture presentation the teacher focuses the students' attention on step [1] of the six-step process through a 10-minute brainstorming exercise. The students are directed to simply make a list of possible topics they may want to write about. A due date is given for the final

selection of topics, and the students have started on the path toward successful research papers.

As a comprehension check during the following class period, the six-steps of the research process are elicited from and explained by the students. Any questions the students may have can be cleared up at this time. An open discussion of the process and the expectations for the final paper allows the teacher to fill in any gaps in the student's understanding of the overall researching and writing process.

COLLABORATIVE WORK WITH THE STUDENTS

Once the research process is initiated and the students have begun their journey through the six steps, the collaborative work done between the student and the teacher is vital to the student's learning and to the success of the project. The teacher in effect becomes a guide for the students as the students develop their own views on a topic, research those views, and as the students go through the drafts required in designing the paper for the American reader. In the course of such individual work with the students the teacher asks questions gives feedback, and points out areas where the student needs further work. The

role of the teacher becomes extremely important in assuring the success of the collaborative work done with the student.

In looking at the role the teacher plays in guiding the student through the six-step process, the teacher must primarily be enthusiastic and show interest in the student's work. In my experience, both as student and teacher, if a teacher is genuinely excited about the material and the work being done, it not only inspires the student to work toward perfecting the assignment, but it also promotes the collaborative relationship between teacher and student. A teacher can show this interest and enthusiasm to the student in several ways. Most importantly the teacher should give time to each student at each step of the research process, giving feedback on the topics chosen, asking questions which help the students to focus their hypotheses, monitoring the research, and working with the students as they develop drafts of their papers.

In establishing a collaborative relationship with the student, the teacher must seek to understand the students' views. When the student presents the teacher with a piece of writing, be it a proposed topic, a hypothesis, or an initial draft of the paper, the teacher must first try to understand what the student has written. Given a Taiwanese student writing about the 'external pressures that influence the wildlife protection issue in Taiwan,' the teacher must

first understand what the student means by 'external.' Does the student mean pressures outside of Taiwan itself? In this case the student actually meant pressures inside of Taiwan which influence the governmental wildlife policy, pressures such as constituent groups or the media. An understanding of the focus of the student's work is necessary for any further collaboration between the student and the teacher to be successful. Especially in working with ESL students, an understanding which is too hastily formed can lead to great confusion for both the student and the teacher. Therefore, a teacher should take the time to fully understand what the student is trying to say, before making any comment on their work.

One way of gaining insight into the student's work and helping the student to clarify his or her ideas is through asking questions like those used in process writing. In the case of the ESL student writing about factors influencing the environmental issue in Taiwan, instead of criticizing the use of the word 'external' as being vague, the teacher might ask:

> What do you mean by the word 'external'?
> Can you give me an example of an external pressure?

Through questions like this, the student becomes aware of areas where the reader may have difficulty understanding, and by asking questions the teacher gives the student a chance to clarify the meaning of a passage.

The following are some common questions I have found particularly useful in the work I have done with ESL students writing research papers:

> As I understand it, your viewpoint is the following....Is that correct?
>
> Did you find support for this point in any of the books you read?
>
> What is your opinion on this?
>
> What is the controlling idea for this paragraph?
>
> What do you want to say here?
>
> Why is this important?
>
> How does this relate to your thesis?

The questions asked are different depending on the student and the student's work. To point out the areas where the student needs clarification, the teacher must be a reader and ask the questions a reader might ask.

After the teacher has gained some understanding for what the student is trying to say, and allowed the student to clarify their ideas, the teacher can then direct the student toward areas in which to focus their efforts. In deciding where to direct the student's attention, the

teacher should first look at where the student is in the six-step process. If, in the teacher's estimation, the student has successfully completed one step in the process, the student should be directed to focus their attention on the next step. In the example of the student writing about external pressures influencing the environmental policy in Taiwan, the student had decided on a topic and done sufficient exploration into the topic to be able to begin formulating a hypothesis, and I directed the student to form an opinion on the topic.

If a student has entered the final stage of the research process and has written a draft of the paper, the teacher must be cautious in directing the student. In the six-step process as outlined, the focus in step [6] is on designing the paper for the American reader. A tendency for both the teacher and the ESL student when viewing a first draft of a paper is to get hung up in correcting grammar and mechanical problems. This however wastes time, because it is likely that the content will change anyway before a final draft is reached. Remembering that the student must first focus on the overall organization of ideas in the paper, the teacher should focus the student on the content of the paper.

Each teacher develops a personal style when working collaboratively with students on a project. The aspects of collaboration discussed in this section are what I consider to be vital aspects of successful collaborative work in a research project. Following these guidelines I have found collaborative work to be very successful in teaching ESL students to write research papers. Much of the collaborative work done in my classes at Paul Smith's College was done in a workshop environment, or in individual conferences with the students both during class time and outside of the class by appointment.

IMPORTANT ASPECTS OF RESEARCH AND DOCUMENTATION

Using the Library

Finding appropriate sources to support a thesis is perhaps the key to a successful research paper. Often international students find libraries at American colleges and universities confusing because of their newness, but the process of learning to use the library can be made easier for the students. Well in advance of the assignment the instructor should take the time to become familiar with the library, and arrange with a librarian to bring the class to

the library for an orientation. Most librarians are eager to arrange a special orientation for ESL classes, if they are notified in advance. In my experience librarians took the time to simplify the orientation and give the students practice exercises in finding material in the library. In utilizing the librarian for the orientation, the students also get a chance to meet a valuable resource person who can help them in their research.

It is important for the instructor to participate in the orientation with the students, in order to predict areas where the students may have questions. After the orientation, continued assistance from the instructor is needed. During the research stage in step [4], class periods can be spent in the library, so that the instructor can work with the students as they search for sources to support their theses.

Other Resources Available to the Students

When working with an ESL class it is particularly important to encourage the students to use sources other than the library to find support for their theses. Depending on the topic, students can use information from interviews, questionnaires, television, radio, lectures, and so on, in addition to the information from sources found in

the library. Going outside of the library to obtain source material gives the international student a chance to interact and learn more about the American culture in the process of completing the research assignment.

Documentation

Documentation is perhaps the most challenging of the formalities in a research assignment. As mentioned previously in chapter 2, there are various methods of documentation found in research done in English. It is important to be honest with the students and inform them that there are various methods of documentation, but it can be ambiguous for a teacher not to specify a method of documentation for the class to use. In my experience, requiring all of the students to learn and use the same method of documentation in their papers is the most effective approach. Requiring the use of one method ensures that the students will remain consistent and learn the basics of documentation.

In choosing which method of documentation to use, it is important to consider a number of factors. Certain methods of documentation are used in certain fields. If a majority of the students are studying in the same field, this may determine the method of documentation chosen. Also

important is to discover if other instructors at the college or university prefer one method of documentation over another. At Paul Smith's College, where I was an instructor, faculty teaching the second semester of freshman English preferred the parenthetical reference method outlined in "A Guide to the New MLA Documentation Style" by Joseph Trimmer.(1984) Because the method as outlined in the new MLA documentation style is also simple and relatively clear, I chose to use this method in my classes.

The method of documentation should be presented to the class before the students begin researching, so that they are able to properly document all of their research. In the presentation of the documentation method to an ESL class, it is important to go step by step through the process with the students, and follow up the presentation with practice exercises. A careful presentation and effective practice exercises help the students to learn the important aspects of the documentation process. In addition to the presentation and practice exercises, it is also necessary to continue monitoring the students' documentation periodically throughout the researching and writing process.

ACCOMPANYING EXERCISES

I have found the following exercises to be useful in addressing some common challenges ESL students face during the research and writing process. The exercises deal mainly with documentation and writing of the paper and are done as whole class exercises. See the suggested timetable at the end of this chapter for when these exercises might be used in the course of teaching the research paper.

1) Documenting Information from Books and Magazines

Time: 30 minutes

Preparation: Teacher photocopies title page, copyright information, and one page of text from several books. Teacher photocopies cover and article from several periodicals. Teacher underlines section of text to be documented. (For example see Appendix B)

Objective: To give the students practice in documenting information from books and magazines according to the documentation guideline to be followed in the research paper.

Previously: The method of documentation has been chosen and outlined by the teacher. Students have copies of example guidelines to follow.

Note: This exercise is particularly useful for ESL students who have never previously written research papers in English before.

A) Teacher distributes photocopies containing bibliographic information from several books to the class.

B) Students are directed to write out the complete citation for the text.

Example:

"...the act of composing is closely bound up with the process of thinking." (Neman 172)

Neman, Beth. Teaching Students to Write. Columbus: Charles E. Merrill Publishing, 1980.

C) Teacher circulates, monitoring students' work and answering questions.

D) Students write the examples on the board. Any corrections are elicited from the students.

E) Teacher points out important aspects of documentation:

-information included

-ordering of the information

-punctuation

-capitalization

-spacing.

2) When to Document Information

Time: 30 minutes

Preparation: The teacher photocopies a list of information taken from books and magazines.

Objective: To apply the guidelines given for when to document information from source material.

A) The teacher presents the following criteria for documenting information in research papers:

You should document if - (Neman 189-190)

-you did not know the information previously

-you cannot find the information in any book or encyclopedia on the subject

-the information is an interpretation or an opinion

-the information is disputable, for example, the results of studies

B) The teacher distributes list of information taken from source material. The students are directed to put an 'X' before information that needs no documentation and write 'DOC' before information requiring documentation according to the guidelines given.

Example:

DOC In all, 25 million people are involved in local and regional environmental conservation issues in the U.S.

X The Whooping Crane Conservation Association is working toward preventing the extinction of the whooping crane.

DOC The data shows that Southgate Pond is one of the most important breeding areas for birds in the Virgin Islands.

X The National Geographic Society was founded in 1888.

C) The students work in pairs to complete the exercise. The teacher circulates, monitoring their work.

D) The answers are discussed as a class.

3) Finding Relevant Information in Sources

Time: 40 minutes

Preparation: The teacher photocopies two articles from books or periodicals. In one article the teacher has underlined information pertinent to a particular thesis.

Objective: To find relevant information in an article given a well-defined thesis.

A) The teacher distributes an article in which information pertinent to the thesis has been under-

lined. The teacher discusses briefly how the information directly relates to the thesis, and why other information in the article is not relevant.

B) The teacher distributes the other article and the students are directed to locate the information in the article which relates to the given thesis. See Example in Figure 2.

C) The specific information underlined by the students is elicited by the teacher and the relevance of that information to the given thesis is discussed.

4) Designing the Essay - Scrambled Paragraphs

Time: 30-40 minutes

Preparation: The teacher photocopies short example research essay which follows the essay design to be used in the research papers. The teacher cuts it into individual paragraphs.

Objective: To organize paragraphs of an essay in a way which follows the essay design given for the research paper and to explain how this organization fits the design.

Previously: The essay design shown in Figure 1 has been presented and explained to the students.

Figure 2

Thesis: Due mainly to lack of organization and conflicting goals, the Navajo Indian Nation has continued to lose strength in this decade.

Article:

INDIANS

Turmoil in the Navajo Nation

Except for a four-year break, Peter MacDonald Sr. has ruled the 200,000-member Navajo nation as its strong-willed chairman ever since 1970. Presiding over a Southwest desert reservation larger in area than Vermont, New Hampshire and Massachusetts combined, he has lived well on his $55,000 annual salary plus, according to witnesses, some expensive perks. Yet last week MacDonald lost his grip on his honored post. Tainted by allegations that he had accepted bribes from contractors seeking business with the tribe, he declared that he would take an extended leave, but then changed his mind and attempted to cling to power.

Peter MacDonald

MacDonald insisted he was innocent of charges raised during recent hearings of the Senate Select Committee on Indian Affairs, and pleaded with the 88-member Navajo council to let him retain his salary and to give him legal help as he fights to clear his name. When the council refused to grant him these conditions, MacDonald vowed that he would not vacate his elective position after all. The council then voted to place MacDonald on indefinite leave, with pay. The Navajos had never before questioned the conduct of one of their chairmen, assuming each had only the best interests of his followers in mind. ■

A) The teacher distributes the scrambled paragraphs to groups of 3 or 4 students.

B) The students read and arrange the paragraphs according to the design to be followed in the research paper.

C) The students present their organization of the paragraphs to the other groups in the class and explain how this organization fits the design given.

D) The teacher moderates the discussion and at the conclusion gives the students a copy of the original essay.

5) Incorporating Information into the Text

Time: 30 minutes

Preparation: Teacher photocopies example research paper.

Objective: To recognize and underline introductions to and discussions of source information in an example research paper.

Note: This exercise can be used effectively in initiating a discussion on the importance of discussing all quoted and paraphrased information used in a research paper. It can also be used to point out examples of how information can be incorporated into the text.

A) The teacher distributes example research papers to groups of 3 or 4 students.

B) The teacher directs the students to work together in finding and underlining areas of the text where the author introduces and discusses information gathered from other sources.

C) The teacher circulates, monitoring the students' work and answering questions.

D) The teacher elicits from the students the information they have underlined and discusses why the information is commented on in this way, and how the students could use similar discussions in their papers.

See Example in Figure 3.

SUGGESTED TIMETABLE

The following is a suggested timetable for teaching the research paper. The timetable assumes that the class has at least 6 weeks to complete the research paper, and it allows some time for additional material to be covered in class if necessary.

Week 1 -Introductory lecture; hand out assignment
-Topics due

Figure 3

By the turn of the century, more and more wires were strung across rows of crops and down dirt roads connecting country to city. In fact, John Brooks, in his comprehensive study Telephone: The First Hundred Years, notes that "the increase in the number of rural phones between 1902 and 1907 was truly phenomenal—from 260,000 to 1,465,000 or 49 percent" (116). This high demand suggested that farmers did not perceive telephones as the intrusion of an impersonal technology into their homes, but as the extension of their personal relationships into a new community. Because most rural phones were on the party line, they created a new network of friends and a new form of entertainment—eavesdropping. When asked how she liked her new telephone service, a farm wife replied, "Well, we liked it a lot at first, and do yet, only spring work is coming on so heavy that we don't have time to listen now" (qtd. in Brooks 117).

By the 1920s the phone had become a commonplace in most American homes. Kleinfield suggests that the advertisements created by Bell's ad agency, N.W. Ayer, for magazines such as Colliers described "the good intentions and social benefits" of the telephone in "friendly-folksy, all-is-well themes" (149-50). In Norman Rockwell-type pictures, AT&T's ads depicted "family groups with glowing healthy, apple-cheeked youngsters and beaming, silver topped grandmas and grandpas" (Kleinfield 150). But all was not well on the family farm. The industrial revolution, which had begun in the late nineteenth century, had reached its first boom period, luring more and more apple-cheeked youngsters to the thriving factories in the city. The 1920 census confirmed the effect of this social change: for the first time in the nation's history more Americans lived in urban areas than in rural areas (Nash 78).

excerpt from "A Guide to the New MLA Documentation Style" by Joseph Trimmer, pages 25-27.

-Library orientation

Week 2 -Hypothesis due

-Schedule time for individual conferences

-Presentation of documentation style

-Exercises: Documentation and Locating Relevant Information

Week 3 -Schedule classtime in library

-Teacher monitors research

-Schedule time for individual conferences

Week 4 -Review of Essay Design

-Design exercise: Scrambled Paragraphs

-Exercise: Incorporating information into the text

-Schedule time for individual conferences

Week 5 -Rough draft of paper due

-Schedule time for in-class work on research papers

-Schedule time for individual conferences

Week 6 -Revised draft of research papers due

-Schedule time for in-class work on research papers

-Schedule time for individual conferences

Final drafts due at the end of Week 6 or beginning of Week 7.

CHAPTER 5

EVALUATION OF STUDENT WORK

Final evaluation of the research paper is based both on the final product and on the students' participation in the process of developing and writing the paper. A major goal in the research assignment taught in the first semester English Composition course at Paul Smith's College is for the students to learn the basics of how to write an American research paper. Even if the final draft of the paper is simple, if the student has mastered the basics of the six-step process, then the student will be able to expand on these skills in later, more complex assignments. Therefore, in a final written evaluation of the project the teacher must look both at the student's progress and learning in the course of developing and writing the paper and at the significance, clarity and correctness of the final draft.

In evaluating the student's work in writing the research paper, the teacher gives a written evaluation. (See Figure 4) The written evaluation is in depth and allows the teacher to evaluate all aspects of the assignment separately. Looking at each aspect of the research paper separately allows the teacher to be more objective in

Figure 4

GRADING GUIDELINES

	A-B Strong		C Average		D-F Weak
1) COMPLETION OF THE ASSIGNMENT: The student has fulfilled the assignment within the guidelines and challenges outlined by the instructor.	1	2	3	4	5
2) PARTICIPATION: The student successfully followed the process outlined by the instructor giving careful attention to and progressing at each stage in the process	1	2	3	4	5
3) CONTENT: A significant thesis clearly defined and supported with concrete and relevant detail.	1	2	3	4	5
4) DESIGN: The writing progresses by clear and orderly stages with an appropriate introduction, supporting text & conclusion.	1	2	3	4	5
5) PARAGRAPHS: The paragraphs are coherent, unified and fully developed; transitions between paragraphs are logical and effective.	1	2	3	4	5
6) SENTENCES: The sentences are coherent; the nouns and verbs are clear; the diction is precise and consistent with the material.	1	2	3	4	5
7) MECHANICS: The consistent use of standard grammar, punctuation and spelling; departures only for clear, positive effects.	1	2	3	4	5

COMMENTS:

evaluating a very involved assignment. The scores are then averaged to come up with a final grade.

Perhaps more important to the student's learning are the written and verbal comments the teacher gives accompanying the final evaluation. Similar to the work done in the course of the assignment, the teacher should schedule a time to have an individual conference with the student to go over the final evaluation. At this time the teacher carefully explains how each score was determined, as well as giving an overall comment on the student's work and directing the student where to focus future efforts.

In the course of the evaluation it is often effective to allow the students to evaluate their own work. At Paul Smith's College I allowed the students to fill out their own evaluation sheets before we met together to discuss the evaluation. Even though a few students in every class do not take such self-evaluations seriously and therefore overestimate their work, most students are aware of their difficulties, and allowing the students to evaluate their own work makes the final individual conference a time for the student and the teacher to discuss productively together the final evaluation.

CONCLUSION

This paper evolved from a year spent at Paul Smith's College where I had the opportunity to teach ESL students how to write research papers. After looking at the challenges facing the students given such an assignment, I broke down the process into six steps and developed an approach to teaching the research paper. Much of the work was based on my own reasonably successful past experiences with writing research papers. I enjoyed research, and I hope I brought some of my excitement for such projects to the students.

If I am recommending this approach to teaching the reseach paper to other teachers, I fear that others may disregard it as requiring too much additional time and effort on the part of the teacher. A more traditional approach to teaching the research paper generally leaves the students to do much of the work on their own, allowing the teacher to cover other things in class. My approach follows the students closely from beginning to end, and although the teacher must devote additional time and attention to the students, the rewards for both the students and the teacher are well worth the effort.

For the students, the reward comes in their learning and in the development of critical thinking skills. Following the students through the research and working with them to clarify their ideas allow the students to explore their topic in depth as well as solidify their thinking on an issue. In addition, by monitoring the students closely as they develop their research papers, the teacher helps the students learn good research habits. And finally, through working with the students on the writing of their papers, the students can see how a reader might respond to their writing, and where modifications could be made to improve the reader's comprehension.

For the teacher, the rewards of using such an approach are also in learning. Important for me was being able to explore my own views on research and teaching the research paper. Then, from working with the students I further learned about formulation of ideas and what is involved in developing and writing a research paper. I used each session with the students as a mini laboratory, looking for common denominators and seeking for ways to enhance their learning. I was able to look carefully at how the collaborative work with the students was reflected in the various drafts of their papers. I was able to learn more about the different tendencies ESL students have in research and writing. And as a bonus, I also found I learned about

such things as tourism in the Dominican Republic, the car industry in Japan, forest conservation, and international politics.

The students in my classes at Paul Smith's College completed the assignment with success. I saw real progress in their thoughts and in their writing during the six weeks spent on the project, and the students learned skills which helped them in other assignments at the college. In closing, I would hope that some of what I said here is of use to other teachers, or that it inspires others to do more research into teaching ESL students how to write research papers.

OTHER RESOURCES

For those teachers who are in the position of teaching research papers to ESL students at an American college or university, I would like to point out several books I came across in the course of writing this paper which may be useful as additional resources:

Robert Kaplan's Exploring Academic Discourse (1983) addresses academic reading and writing for advanced ESL students especially those studying in the scientific or technical fields. Kaplan's book contains many valuable exercises. Writing the term paper is specifically addressed in the appendix of the book.

Research Papers by William Coyle (1988) leads the student through developing and writing a research paper through narrative and exercises. Coyle's book is thorough but does not specifically address the challenges faced by ESL students, although it could be used by the advanced ESL student who has written research papers previously.

Research Matters by Liz Hamp-Lyons and Karen Berry Courter (1984) is also for the more advanced ESL student and focuses primarily on the formalities and mechanics of writing research papers, not on the more creative aspect of developing one's viewpoint and argument in a research assignment. This book provides a thorough discussion of library research and documentation and provides some useful exercises.

Writing the research paper is also addressed in several chapters of Joy M. Reid's The Process of Composition (1988). These chapters look closely at notetaking and library research skills involved in developing a term paper. Reid provides some useful exercises and the book can be used for ESL students ranging from intermediate to advanced.

Appendix A:

English Composition 131 FSP
Research Paper Assignment

1) Paper will be due no later than 5 PM Friday April 1.

2) All papers must be 4-6 pages. (These pages do not include title page, list of works cited, illustrations, etc.)

3) All papers must be typed and double spaced.

4) All papers must include:
- -a title page
- -a minimum of 5 citations
- -a list of works cited

5) At least four primary sources must be cited.

6) All papers must have an introduction, a clear thesis statement, a minimum of three appropriate support paragraphs with clear topic sentences, and a conclusion.

7) Document your paper according to the method outlined in "A Guide to the New MLA Documentation Style" by Joseph Trimmer. We will go over documentation in class.

8) All topics and theses statements must be approved by the instructor before the paper will be accepted.

THE INSTRUCTOR RESERVES THE RIGHT TO MODIFY THIS ASSIGNMENT AS SHE SEES FIT. STUDENTS WILL BE PROPERLY NOTIFIED.

Appendix B:

THE PLEASURES OF POETRY

Donald Hall
UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

Harper & Row, Publishers
NEW YORK EVANSTON SAN FRANCISCO LONDON

THE PLEASURES OF POETRY

Copyright © 1971 by Donald Hall

Printed in the United States of America. All rights reserved. No part of this book may be used or reproduced in any manner whatsoever without written permission except in the case of brief quotations embodied in critical articles and reviews. For information address Harper & Row, Publishers, Inc., 49 East 33rd Street, New York, N.Y. 10016.

STANDARD BOOK NUMBER: 06-042604-7

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS CATALOG CARD NUMBER: 70-123934

The pleasures of poetry vary. One poem amuses us, another moves us to tears; one poem delights us with its aptness, another has us floating in a daze of sensual enjoyment. The poems that please me the most are journeys of the imagination, explorations of areas inside ourselves which are mostly dark, but which a poem illuminates with its own strange light. There is also a poetry of sheer intelligent force, a revelation of depth by organized wisdom. Particular poems may please us in one way or another, and each possible way requires a particular sort of sensitivity or a particular awakening of our senses. Once we are used to the requirements of one type of poem, we are ready to enjoy it in its many embodiments. When we are not familiar with the specific pleasure, we usually call the poem obscure, or poetry dull, or ourselves unable to read poetry. But if we persevere into famili-

List of Works Cited

Carrell, Patricia L., and Joan C. Eisterhold. "Schema Theory and ESL Reading Pedagogy." TESOL Quarterly 17.4 (December 1983): 553-573.

Coyle, William. Research Papers. 7th ed. New York: Macmillan Publishing, 1988.

Hall, Edward T. Beyond Culture. New York: Anchor Press / Doubleday, 1981.

Hamp - Lyons, Liz, and Karen Berry Courter. Research Matters. Cambridge: Newbury House Publishers, 1984.

Kaplan, Robert B. "Contrastive Rhetoric and the Teaching of Composition." TESOL Quarterly 1(September 1967): 10-16.

Kaplan, Robert B., and Peter A. Shaw. Exploring Academic Discourse: A Textbook for Advanced Level ESL Reading and Writing Students. Rowley, MA: Newbury House Publishers, 1983.

Neman, Beth. Teaching Students to Write. Columbus: Charles E. Merrill Publishing, 1980.

Reid, Joy M. The Process of Composition. 2nd ed. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1988.

Smalley, Regina L., and Mary K. Ruetten. Refining Composition Skills: Rhetoric and Grammar for ESL Students. 2nd ed. New York: Macmillan Publishing, 1986.

Trimmer, Joseph F. "A Guide to the New MLA Documentation Style." Boston: Houghton-Mifflin, 1984.